

# **A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF LEADERSHIP STYLES USED AT NOLS AND OUTWARD BOUND**

BY

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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this research paper is to investigate and compare leadership styles used at National Outdoor Leadership School and Outward Bound. Specifically, the literature on general leadership styles, Educational models, NOLS and OB were used to situate the question within a context. Referenced are models such as experiential education, adventure education, outdoor education, environmental education, Bruce's (2006) motivational needs theory, Hersey's (2009) situational leadership model, Priest's (2005) Five sources of power and conditional outdoor leadership theory model (COLT). I will also be using my own experience as an outdoor leader to further investigate what my finding will mean to me. This research will bring to light the issues leaders face in the outdoors and what needs to be done to keep participants safe. OB and NOLS leadership styles will be the focus that gives my research more direction and helps relate the theories to real life practices. Recommendations for leaders of the future based on my findings are also included.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

The purpose of this study is to compare leadership styles used by facilitators in Outward Bound and NOLS; two of the leading outdoor education organizations in North America. Outward Bound and NOLS both practice alternative types of education, which have been termed experiential education, adventure education, environmental education, adventure education and place-based education (National Outdoor Leadership School , 2005). Although both organizations seem very similar, they are truly very different in structure and how they interact with their participants. By studying the various forms of education they use, I have generated an understanding of the differences and similarities between the two organizations, as they lead their participants to success. Within this study and my research I also have identified connections between different types of education and what leadership styles best suit them.

The choice to indulge myself in research surrounding these organizations and to write a paper on them comes from a much deeper place than my experiences gained over the past two years in the Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies. Since the days I can remember growing up in South Africa and then in Saudi Arabia, I always had difficulty with learning within the confines of a classroom and as a kid always knew I was not as unintelligent as my grades presented. I knew that there was a better way for me to learn about the disciplines I was being taught, than to be sitting in a classroom for eight hours a day. As I went through my teenage years studying in the IGCSE and then the IB program, I always felt that my education was very much based on theories and was disconnected from the real world. Only

when I started going on various outdoor orientated camps did I realized that there is a much better way for me to learn in a holistic manner.

When I graduated from high school I had convinced myself that I did not have the intelligence to go into a degree program, as I felt that I might fail. Then I decided to pursue outdoor leadership as my focus and flew to Canada for the six-month Wilderness Leadership Certificate Program through Capilano University. Once I experienced this whole new way of education where theory-based classroom sessions were integrated with practical experience, a new chapter of my life began. The program inspired me to continue with the journey of higher education and I next transferred to Thompson Rivers University for the Adventure Guide program. Over the next two years my experiences really inspired my interest in leadership and education. I finally felt like I was learning in a holistic way and was satisfying my need for the outdoors while studying something I really enjoyed.

Once I completed the Adventure Program I still felt the desire to continue the journey towards learning more about alternative types of education and leadership so I applied to the BIS at TRU. My concentration in the BIS is outdoor and experiential education and over the last two years I have gained a great deal of theoretical and practical leadership and educational experiences. It has been a long learning process so far but has been a very satisfying progression. This thesis is another step forward in my journey of exploring the realm of outdoor education and will help to further guide me in leadership and education understanding.

For the purpose of this study I will define the key word in my title, Leadership. Leadership has many definitions and is used differently in many contexts. The leadership style used in a specific setting may be different depending on many factors such as a

facilitator's preference, the environment and the participants. As there are many leadership styles that will be discussed throughout the study I will simply define leadership as the method a NOLS or OB leader uses to guide a group of individuals to their objectives.

A facilitator is someone who is responsible for helping a group move in a certain direction within the context of a particular program. Whether the facilitator has a major role in the learning outcomes of the students or not, is not the main priority here, as their responsibility is to guide the students in their learning. A facilitator may also have a larger leadership role within a group depending on the objectives or nature of the group.

## **Research Questions and Objectives**

I recognize that this topic is an extremely broad multidisciplinary subject and that my exploration into NOLS and OB is a lifetime worth of analysis. That said, I have to focus my thesis on a few major questions of interest to direct my research, which are listed below:

- 1. What are the similarities and differences between how NOLS and OB programs are run.*
- 2. How facilitators lead their participants in learning?*
- 3. What types of education styles are predominantly used by both organizations?*

Objectives of the research included:

1. Creation of a literature review.
2. Gain theoretical knowledge of leadership styles and educational philosophies in order to become a better teacher and educator.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

This literature review consists of research that helped me gain further knowledge about NOLS and OB in order to analyze and compare the organizations. I used secondary research as my main source of knowledge as the fundamentals of the models I will be discussing have been well documented. I will be gathering the literature from various sources including journal articles, books and official websites. My research focuses on different types of alternative education, leadership styles and philosophies, which are all connected to my thesis topic “a comparative analysis of leadership styles used at NOLS and Outward Bound”. The literature below gives context to my discussion section in Chapter Three.

There are many private and government run outdoor programs that exist around the world. According to Miles and Priest (1999) in modern society we find more and more businesses, schools, universities and government organizations using the outdoors as part of their training and teaching. Society has spent hundreds of years trying to find ways to make life easier and less connected with nature, that it is contradictory that all these programs are becoming so popular. The reason for this shift to outdoor training is because as the world is becoming more about the material things we own; creativity, self-expression and relationships are suffering (Miles & Priest, 1999).

The most important component to the success of these outdoor adventure programs besides being in the wilderness is well-trained leaders and facilitators who need to drive the experiences. Zook (1986) suggests that outdoor adventure programs can provide growth in five areas that are neglected by our society.



Listed below are five areas of growth that adventure programs provide with short descriptions of each.

1. “Opportunities to increase their self-understanding and to develop their individual capabilities” (Zook, 1986, p. 8).

In order for participants to gain personal growth, leaders need to drive or lead them to develop their potential in as many disciplines as possible. They must be able to let participants fail and participate in failure-bound endeavors. The leaders need to be able to use a diverse array of teaching techniques that promote internal discovery for participants. Lastly a leader needs to be able to relate and understand participants who become stressed and provide support to general human needs.

2. “Living demonstrations of mankind’s interdependence (Zook, 1986, p. 8).”

In order to teach lessons of human interdependence and promote sensitivity to others a leader must have unconditional acceptance of each individual and be enthusiastic when working with the group. A leader needs to have knowledge on group dynamics and interaction patterns between people. In addition the ability to deal with adverse group behavior and to listen to each individual is essential.

3. “Real-life adventures (Zook, 1986, p. 8).”

In order to create real life adventure leaders need to be able to remove themselves emotionally from stressful situations and maintain safety at all times. They need to have the

technical knowledge and skill to move through risky terrain safely and be able to deal with people in different emotional states.

4. “Broader understandings of people’s relationship with nature (Zook, 1986, p. 8).”

In order for individuals to see the relationships between people and nature a leader needs to have some knowledge on the sciences of nature such as geology and biology. They need to be up to date on current environmental issues and be able to teach using real life lessons. Lastly the leader needs to have an appreciation of the natural environment and the esthetic of the surroundings.

5. “Opportunities to clarify the distinction between needs and wants (Zook, 1986, p. 8).”

In order for a leader to allow participants to see clarity in what they need and want they must understand the separation between a need and a want. They need to lean towards being able to live simply and be able to identify the more basic issues in life (Zook, 1986).

## **2.1. Literature on Outward Bound and NOLS**

There have been a number of major influencers of the evolution of outdoor education within modern society including individual pioneers such as Hahn, Dewey, Petzoldt and the organizations they created. Kurt Hahn was one of the first major influences in the evolution and creation of outdoor and experiential education through the opening of two schools in the 1920's, Salem in Germany and Gordonstoun in Scotland. The school's programs were to balance challenging activities with academics in order to fully develop students. In around the same time as Kurt Hahn was influencing the world's ways of education, John Dewey was also developing what was called the progressive education movement. He inspired a high level of democracy in the classroom with the same balance of activities as Kurt Hahn was teaching (Project Adventure, 2009).

In 1941 Kurt Hahn helped develop an Outward Bound program in the United Kingdom which was a month long course designed to be intensely physical, emotional and mentally challenging. Just after Outward Bound was developed in the UK, Campbell Loughmiller opened Wilderness Therapeutic Camps in 1955. The wilderness camps were for at-risk children involving hiking, canoeing and other various activities in the USA. In 1960 to 1970 a man named Josh Miner brought the model of education back to America based on Kurt Hahn's Outward Bound Schools in the UK. The Outward Bound model of education caught on extremely fast and spread across the US becoming the biggest outdoor education program in the US.

In 1965 a mountaineer, Paul Petzoldt founded National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS). His vision was to use long expeditions to train people in skills for leading in the outdoors. Over the next 25 years NOLS, under the direction of Jim Ratz and John Gantz,

developed future leaders for the outdoors creating two initiatives; Leave no Trace and the Wilderness Risk Managers Conference (Project Adventure, 2009).

Project Adventure was the first attempt to integrate Outdoor Education concepts such as Outward Bound into a school setting. Jerry Pieh was the founder of Project Adventure and wanted this type of education to be accessible to everyone.

In 1969 Pieh was the principle of the Hamilton-Wenham Regional High School, and received funding to develop the first integrated program consisting of both classroom and outdoor elements. By 1980 several hundred educational facilities had adopted the Project Adventure program (Project Adventure, 2009).

## **Outward Bound**

Outward Bound is an organization whose goal is to encourage students to become more involved in exploring new and unexplored areas in their lives through experiential experiences. The goal of Outward Bound is to take students out of the classroom and put them into situations that will enable them to learn from their experiences. Generally the programs involve a series of ups and downs with intense physical activity followed by periods of reflection, which generates a continuous progression through the experience. “Each phase of the course should lead naturally into the next, and effort should be made to insure that each phase is complete and fully resolved with the student” (Bacon, 1983, p. 97).

Outward Bound although an experiential based program; wants students to go away with basic mountaineering and camp craft skills. Students in the Outward Bound program should leave with the following outcomes:

- A better understanding of themselves.

- Problem solving and decision making skills.
- A greater awareness and appreciation for the natural environment.
- Understand the need for cooperation with others.
- Developed personal values, benefits and are responsive to the needs of others (Bacon, 1983).

Outward Bounds key objectives are mostly based on personal and interpersonal growth through experiential education directed within experiences faced in the natural environment.

Their field courses generally range from 21 to 26 days in length. Traditionally, Outward Bound was intended for young men, but since the 1970's expanded programming for young woman, adults and coeducational groups. Morash (1987) discusses that in the United States there are more than 250 traditional secondary schools and institutions of higher education that now use Outward Bound philosophies in their programs. Many establishments in the US such as therapeutic agencies and businesses have adopted the Outward Bound concept in order to cater to their clients and employee's needs.

The Outward Bound schools located in the US are all non-profit owned organizations and are educational institutions. Independent boards of trustees whom have backgrounds from different walks of life govern each facility (Morash, 1987).

## **National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS)**

“NOLS takes students of all ages on remote wilderness expeditions and teaches them technical outdoor skills, leadership, and environmental ethics” (National Outdoor Leadership School, 2013, p. 1).

NOLS is an organization that focuses on taking students out of the traditional classroom setting in order to teach them technical and leadership skills for the outdoors. It was founded in 1965 by a mountaineer Paul Petzoldt, who was the leader in wilderness education (National Outdoor Leadership School, 2013). The main focus of education used in teaching NOLS students is experiential education, which is done in a wilderness setting (National Outdoor Leadership School, 2013). The graduates of the various NOLS programs whether 10 days or a semester long are expected to be able to lead others in the backcountry in different terrain ranging from easy hikes to technical ascents.

Regardless of the course that NOLS is providing they will have six learning targets for students: communication skills, leadership skills, small group behavior, judgment in the outdoors, outdoor skill and environmental awareness (Paisley, Furman, Sibthorp, & Gookin, 2008).

Communication skills are defined as being able to communicate with a small group of people, expressing ideas and giving feedback to others. Leadership is taking responsibility, initiative and being able to make decisions for a group of students. Small group behavior is defined as being a productive group member, being positive and having appropriate behavior. Judgment in the outdoors is being able to identify objective and subjective hazards. Outdoor skills are based on competencies to living and functioning in an outdoor living setting. Environmental awareness is about having an appreciation for the environment and having

knowledge of regulations and restrictions in the outdoors (Paisley, Furman, Sibthorp, & Gookin, 2008).

## **2.2. Forms of Education used in the outdoors**

In order for a facilitator or leader to teach a group of individuals in a successful manner they need to create their program based on an educational philosophy. The type of education style a facilitator may choose will depend on the objective of the lesson or program that is being undertaken. Below I have defined and compared a variety of alternative educational philosophies often used by wilderness-orientated programs. For the purpose of this study alternative educational philosophies are defined as any type of learning that is taking place outside of the traditional classroom setting.

### **Experiential Education**

As experiential education has become more popular with outdoor programs over the years an association has been developed. The association has put policies and standards into place that helps facilitators use the philosophy correctly. The Association of Experiential Education (AEE) was formed in the early 70's and created the most comprehensive standards of common practices in the industry (Association of Experiential Education, 2007). The AEE defines experiential education as “a philosophy that informs many methodologies in which educators purposefully engage with learners in direct experience and focused reflection in order to increase knowledge, development skills, clarify values, and develop people's capacity to contribute to their communities” (Association of Experiential Education, 2014, p. 1).

There are many elements that need to be present for experiential learning to occur. The fundamental elements of creating experiential learning are carefully chosen experiences supported by reflection and critical analysis. The experiences chosen require the learner to take initiative, make decisions and be accountable for results to make the program truly experiential. Within the process of the experience the learner needs to be engaged, be curious, ask questions, investigate and problem solve. This holistic approach to learning, means the learner needs to be physically, emotionally, socially and soulfully involved in the task for the greatest outcome. The experiences that are encountered throughout the journey need to relate personally to the learner and needs to be transferable in everyday life once the program is complete. True experiential education has the possibility for the learner or facilitator to face failure, success, adventure and uncertainty, as the outcome cannot be predicted (Association of Experiential Education, 2014).

Traditional forms of education generally involve learning from reading books or being lectured to in a classroom. This form of education was created in the industrial ages to train people to become better factory workers. These days we have discovered that holistic forms of education go much further in developing all aspects of the person. This is why big organizations and traditional educational facilities are starting to use these philosophies (Miles & Priest, 1999).

Priest (2005) and Martin (2006) have shown that many alternative forms of education are linked by numerous characteristics and need to be interlinked in order to create exceptional outcomes. Many philosophers have different views on how these educational philosophies are linked but for the purpose of this paper and through my research I have determined that experiential education is the umbrella that incorporates other philosophies



such as outdoor, adventure and environmental education (Martin, 2001). The diagram below shows the relationships between the different inter-related fields of experiential education in a visual form.

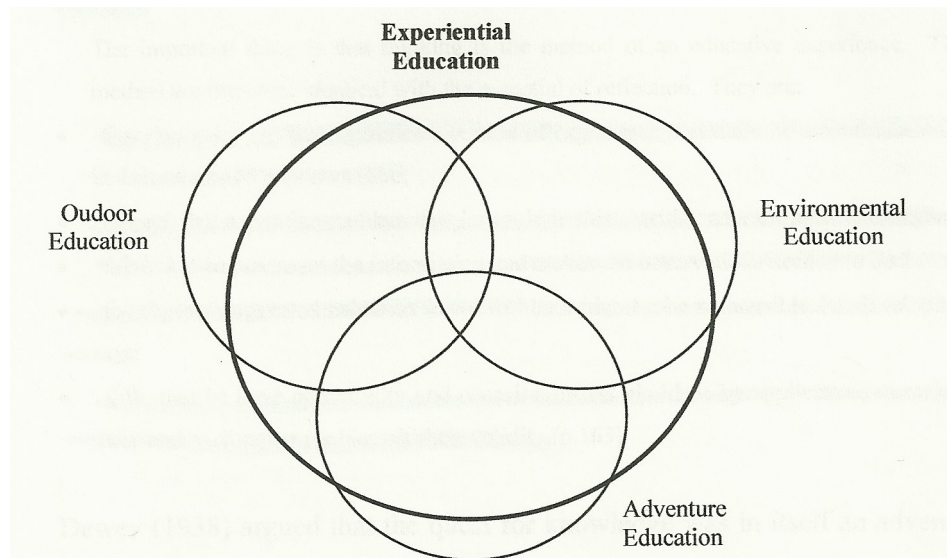


Figure 1 relationship between the different inter-related fields of experiential education (Diagram taken from Martin, 2001. P.23).

As you can see from figure 1, experiential education is the main educational philosophy and within it you have Outdoor, Environmental and Adventure education. This illustrates that whether you are focused on outdoor or adventure based outcomes your objectives and style of learning is connected to experiential education.

## **Outdoor Education**

Outdoor Education can be broken into components making up the foundation of the philosophy. It is a good educational philosophy in complimenting traditional curricula by creating hands on approaches with direct exposure while providing understanding of topics read about in a classroom setting. The concept of outdoor education being an ‘out of classroom’ subject for institutions is reinforced by Richards (1994, p.6)

“It is no longer sufficient to expose as many young people as possible to an outdoor adventure experience. The need is to engage in the process of learning through the outdoors and to extend the philosophy of adventure based experiential learning into the classroom, community and the inner city”  
(Richards, 1994, p.6).

Basically he is reinforcing the notion that the process of the outdoor activity needs to translate back into everyday life. Outdoor education takes place primarily outdoors and is holistic and multi-sensory. It is based on the relationships between people and the natural environment with an interdisciplinary curriculum format (Project Adventure, 2007).

Outdoor Education attempts to develop positive attitudes, appreciation, values and responsibility for the environment. The process of outdoor education uses natural, community and human resources to motivate learning with a broad curriculum (Fitzpatrick, 1968). There are many outcomes associated with a single outdoor educational program, which can be categorized into three domains of learning, knowledge, skills and attitude (Ford, 1981). Other than the domains of learning the program should also develop relationships, which should be intrapersonal, interpersonal and ecological (an attachment to the environment) (Priest, 1990).

## **Adventure Education**

Adventure education is active, engaging and direct learning experience involving a whole person having real consequences for the learner. This form of education has a sense of risk with direct and real consequences, which, has outcomes that can be used further than the program itself. Adventure Educators generally believe that through the experiences created in the programs that no matter the genetic predisposition they will create positive outcomes for the participant (Project Adventure, 2007). Many researchers such as MacArthur (1975) would say that there are a lot of similarities between adventure and outdoor education as, in both philosophies the learner is placed in demanding situations, which leads to learning new skills followed by analysis and reflection. The learner also has to have influence on or have control of the educational process for this philosophy to run correctly (MacArthur, 1975).

## **Environmental Education**

Environmental Education aims to bring awareness to students of the biophysical environment around them and the problems it faces. The aim of this form of education is to allow students to learn about and discover ways of solving environmental problems through motivation and awareness. The programs are designed to concentrate on finding solutions and problem solving in different areas of environmental issues. It is not a form of science education but does use scientific concepts to teach students about the natural world and is preferably taught in an outdoor setting (Project Adventure, 2007). Some would argue that environmental education is the underlying theme to all outdoor and adventure education. The environment is providing the stage where challenge is taking place and therefore creates the learning experience (Priest, 1990).

Ford (1981) suggests that there are seven stages of learning using the natural environment. The first three levels provide comfort, encourage interest and help to build confidence in the natural environment. This would be referring more to outdoor and adventure education. The other four levels develop the learner on a deeper level that look at natural, human and cultural factors affecting the environment, which leads to a holistic view of the world (Ford, 1981). The seven level stage hierarchical model of learning is listed below:

1. Art forms, visual appreciation of the environment.
2. Analogies
3. Sensory awareness
4. Ecological principles
5. Problem solving processes
6. Decision making procedures
7. Ekistics, a philosophy of survival

### **Place-Based education**

Place-Based education is the most recently used name although its concepts have been used and promoted for 100 years. Place-Based education does relate to outdoor and environmental education as it uses conventional outdoor education methodologies in the local environment. Facilitators of Place-Based education envision achieving local ecological and cultural sustainability. It is important to understand that although Place-Based education has connections to outdoor and environmental education; they are all concepts that have been developed individually by different educators (ERIC Development Team, 2000).

### **2.3. Leadership Styles**

Leadership is a diversely used term and means different things to many people within different disciplines in the modern world. Even narrowed down into the context of outdoor leadership there are many different definitions of being a leader. Martin (2006) discusses how outdoor leadership can be narrowed down into three primary goals no matter what the outdoor activity.

Outdoor leaders aim to ensure the safety of all individuals who are engaging in outdoor activities and recreation. They aim to protect and preserve the natural environment in which they venture out into. Lastly they aim to enhance the quality of all individuals' experiences when performing these activities (Martin, 2006).

Being an outdoor leader can be a very stressful thing as usually you are in charge of a group of individuals that are not comfortable and, or competent within the outdoor environment and are relying on your judgment. As the modern world makes travel into the wilderness easier with highways and many forms of transportation available, the need for great leaders is higher than ever.

Numerous studies have asked educators and leaders of outdoor programs what they think makes a leader and they answer with hundreds of factors. That said 12 elements arose from the studies most often than others (Priest, 2005). Below I will summarize each element that studies show makes someone a good leader:

1. Technical skills are required, as a leader needs to be able to perform the activity at a higher level than that of the participants who are relying on them to provide safety and control. Having knowledge of improvised rope rescue systems when rock climbing is a good example of this.

2. Safety skills are a necessary attribute to have when leading in the wilderness, as there are many objective and subjective factors that could need attention. Safety skills include search and rescue, first aid, navigation and interpretation of weather.
3. Environmental skills which include the practice of 'leave no trace' and carrying garbage out of the backcountry. Ethics come into play, as leaders should be weary to have minimal impact on the natural environment e.g. not short cutting already established trails.
4. Organizational skills such as planning, preparing, executing and evaluating trips for the needs of a specific group.
5. Instructional skills such as being able to teach technical skills and leading a group through a productive program.
6. Facilitation skills, which relate to being able to create an environment that encourages interpersonal growth as well as productive group dynamics. An example would be the ability to resolve a conflict between two members of a group.
7. Flexible leadership styles is about having the knowledge of a variety of ways to lead a group of individuals and being able to distinguish which styles to use in different scenarios. This can be hard for many people, as most leaders tend to adopt a favorite style.
8. Experience-based judgment is a skill that every leader should obtain in their field before leading other people. In the unstable wilderness environment there will be many situations that arise when leading a group that is unknown to the leader who needs to rely on knowledge and previous experiences to make a decision. What

this means is that before leading groups of people a leader needs to gain invaluable experience on their own trips.

9. Problem solving skills can be creative or analytical. A leader needs to be able to identify a problem, find a solution, execute the decision and evaluate the outcome.
10. Decision-making skills are important as there will always be a lot of different options in the outdoors and a poor decision could mean danger and a lot of trouble for the group.
11. Effective communication is information exchange between two or more people. Being able to express yourself is important for safety and the execution of a successful experience. Miscommunication in the outdoors could lead to injury or even fatality.
12. Professional ethics refers to the moral standards and values that are expected by professional outdoor leaders. This could refer to a specific businesses or certifying bodies expectations of their members or employees.

It has been said by many organizations such as OB and NOLS that the greatest challenge for outdoor leaders is to recognize their strengths and weaknesses as a leader. Having the knowledge of your ability's and limitations will allow one to grow as a leader (Martin, 2006).

## **Motivational Needs Theory**

In order to analyze and compare leadership styles between NOLS and OB it is important for me to recognize the general theories that are related to leadership in general. According to Martin (2006) the motivational needs theory is based on the phenomena that there are three motivational needs that drive an individual in outdoor environments. The motivational needs are achievement motivation, authority and power and the need for affiliation.

The achievement motivation is where people are looking to obtain challenging but realistic goals and advancement from where they stand now. The authority and power motivation is where people need to feel that they are influential in some way and effective. The final motivation is the affiliation motivation where the individual is looking for friendship and building relationships, they are motivated by the interactions made during an outdoor activity.

Motivational needs theory can help a leader discover what their personal motivations are for being in a leadership position and in turn facilitate growth and understanding within themselves. In many cases people in leadership roles are in those roles for the wrong reasons such as being able to get paid to be in beautiful places. These people are not thinking about what the participants want necessarily and will not create the boundaries needed to satisfy the individual's motivational needs. I think this theory is very good to identify with as a leader to make sure you are delivering a program that will fully satisfy your clients and the theory works both ways for the satisfaction of the client and leader (Martin, 2006). By checking in with your own motivations you will be able to identify your preferences and have the ability to create a program tailored to the objectives and not just for yourself.



Hersey (2009, p.1) says, “a model is meant to be applied in various situations. In fact, for a model to have value it has to be used. And to be used it must be simple. The situational leadership model is about being more effective as a leader”. The situational leadership model involves matching the leaders behaviors (when they are interacting with participants) with the performance needs of the group and individuals. “It is about adapting the directive and supportive behaviors you use to match the readiness of others to perform specific tasks or functions” (Hersey, 2009, p. 1).

The situational leadership model consists of three steps. The first step is to identify the specific job or task that needs to be completed. The leader needs to specify what exactly is expected of the participant and what the task is that needs to be performed. Some participants may need an explanation in detail of what needs to happen while others might perceive this as micromanaging.

Once the job, task or activity has been identified the second step is to assess current performance readiness of the group. The performance of an individual has two variables; ability and willingness. These variables are relative to each other for example if someone has the ability to carry out a task but is not willing to do it, it'll be hard to convince them to carry the task out, vice versa. The interplay between ability and willingness determines the four levels of performance readiness. Below the four levels are listed:

1. Level R1: Unable and insecure or unable and unwilling.
2. Level R2: Unable but confident or willing.
3. Level R3: Able but insecure or able but unwilling.
4. Level R4: Able and confident and willing.

Step three is to match your leadership response to the level of readiness that the participants score. The leadership style chosen is comprised of relationship behavior and task behavior. Relationship behavior “is the extent to which a leader engages in two-way communication with a person, providing socio-economical support or psychological strokes” (Hersey, 2009, p. 1). Task behavior “is the amount of guidance or direction provided. It is the extent the leader engages in defining the who, what, when, where and how the task is to be performed” (Hersey, 2009, p. 1). There are four leadership styles that come out of task and behavior, which are:

1. High task/ low relationship or ‘telling’, the leader takes charge and gives direct instruction how, when and where the task needs to be done.
2. High task/ high relationship or ‘selling’, the leader mentors the participants making sure they all understand what is being done.
3. High relationship/ low task or ‘participating’, participants are apart of the decision making process.
4. Low Relationship/ low task or ‘delegating’, the leader delegates tasks to participants and they accomplish the task how they feel it should be done.

These four leadership styles translate very similar to Priest and Gass (2005), five categories that describe the style of leadership one can portray, which are described below.

Priest and Gass (2005) authors of ‘Effective Leadership in Adventure Programing’ created five categories that describe the style of leadership one can be portraying. According

to them a leader can be seen as telling, selling, testing, consulting, joining or delegating to a group.

When a leader is ‘telling’ a group he is solely making a decision for the group and demanding action from them. When the leader is ‘selling’ the group he is essentially trying to convince the group to follow the decision he has made. When ‘testing’ a group the leader is presenting an idea and allowing the group to make changes to the decision.

When ‘consulting’, he is explaining the problem to the group and seeking input in the decision-making. When a leader is ‘joining’, he is outlining the whole problem to the group and letting the group formulate the plan of action.

The styles discussed above; tells, sells, tests, consults, joins and delegates can be grouped into three sets of pairs which make up three outdoor leadership styles. Telling or selling would be autocratic, testing or consulting would be democratic and joining or delegating would be abdicratic leadership, which were discussed earlier (Priest, 2005).

Figure 2 relationships between leadership styles, shows a visual representative of how the styles of leadership can be grouped together. On the left side of the scale you have your leaders influence on the group, which is autocratic and can be dictatorial. On the right side of the scale the followers influence the decisions made. The leader is a true laissez-faire or abdicratic leader. In the middle of the scale you have your democratic leader who will test and consult with the group to come up with the decisions he will make.

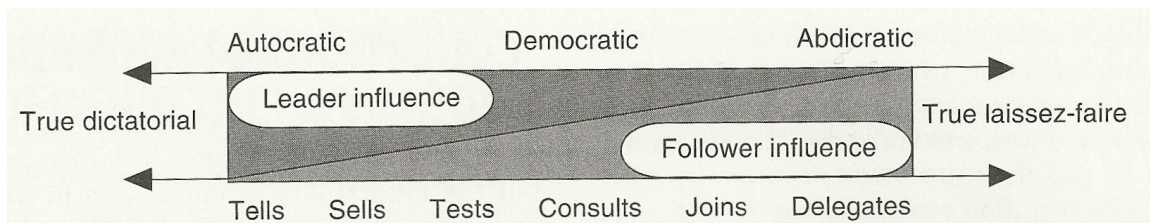


Figure 2 relationships between leadership styles

(Priest, Effective Leadership in Adventure Programing, 2005, p. 245)

## **Five Sources of Power**

Priest (2005) says leadership has been known to have at least five sources of power, which are used to lead over your group. The five sources are known as referent, legitimate, expert, reward and coercive although not all of these styles are equally useful in the outdoors.

### **Referent power**

This is when you are admired or valued by a group of people who will stand behind your opinion and will follow your judgment. You are a referent leader when the group of people following you mirrors your actions and voluntarily follow you. Referent leadership power is not generally seen in the adventure industry or on official leadership programs because most leaders need to have had training and are chosen for the job. This said, if you are a leader who people follow so willingly and you have the qualifications needed for the job this would be the ultimate goal (Priest, 2005). You see this type of leadership with famous people where individuals want to act like you because of your fame.

### **Legitimate power**

This power insinuates to the authority you as a leader are given by a specific agency or group of people who have elected you. The group members will follow you due to the legal responsibility you have been given to make the decisions for them (Priest, 2005). An example of this would be if you were elected by the ACMG to run their guides exams.

### **Expert power**

Expert leadership power is more informal and is related to a specific event or multiple ventures, which you have undergone that, make you stick out as a role model or expert in your field. The more experience or knowledge you have in your field the more likely group members will respect and follow you. For example if you hired a professional skier to come and teach a course, the group will already want to follow the individual based on the experience they have without the need to actually know them. Expert power is essentially having the power of being a celebrity among a group of people for whatever accomplishment and goes beyond the outdoor environment (Priest, 2005).

### **Reward power**

A reward power leader would influence a group's productivity by offering incentives to partake in a particular activity. The down side to this method is that it will not work unless the group you are leading is interested or finds value in the reward offered. An example of this would be if on a climbing course the instructor told the group that they would be able to finish early if everyone did well on a rescue demonstration. If the group was tired and wanted to leave they might be motivated to put the effort in and leave early but if the group wanted to climb more, leaving early would not be motivating (Priest, 2005).

### **Coercive power**

A coercive power leader will use negative language and will threaten the participants into doing extra work or carrying more weight in their packs if they do not do what is required. This type of leadership power does not really have a place in education or outdoors and adventure trips. It is against the core values of these alternative types of education and is

not tolerated in modern times. It may be appropriate in specialized training like army camps where individuals are trained for high-pressure situations (Priest, 2005).

### **Leadership orientation**

Priest (2005) discusses that leaders have either a task or relationship orientated leadership style. The way that you react to a particular situation will be orientated around if you are task or relationship driven. Depending on your orientation you may have a preference in either being an autocratic or abdicratic leader. As a good leader you will have the ability to change your leadership style even if you prefer one over the other to become fully effective in leading a particular group.

That said your preference on whether you are task or relationship orientated are not the major reasons you would use one leadership style over another. There are a number of factors when leading outdoors that need to be taken into consideration such as environmental danger, individuals experience, the group dynamics, the consequences of decisions made and your personal experience and comfort as the leader.

Figure 3 conditional favorability scale represents the five major factors that would flex your leadership style while leading in an outdoor setting.

CONDITIONAL FAVORABILITY		
Low	Medium	High
Bad weather Many perils and hazards Mostly subjective risks not easily controlled	Environmental dangers	Good weather Few perils and hazards Mostly objective risks under human control
Disintegrated and divided Distrustful and competitive Immature and irresponsible	Group	Cohesive and unified Trusting and cooperative Mature and responsible
Novice members Incompetent, unskilled, unable Unsure, inexperienced, unknowledgeable	Individuals	Expert members Competent, skilled, able Confident, experienced, knowledgeable
Deficient and incapable Lacks power base for credibility Poor judgment, stressed out, fatigued	Leader	Proficient and capable Holds strong power base for credibility Sound judgment, in control, fit
Problem cloudy and uncertain Insufficient time and resources available Challenge high with unacceptable outcomes	Consequences of the decision	Problem clear and defined Sufficient time and resources available Challenge low with acceptable outcomes

Figure 3 conditional favorability scale.

(Priest, Effective Leadership in Adventure Programing, 2005, p. 246)

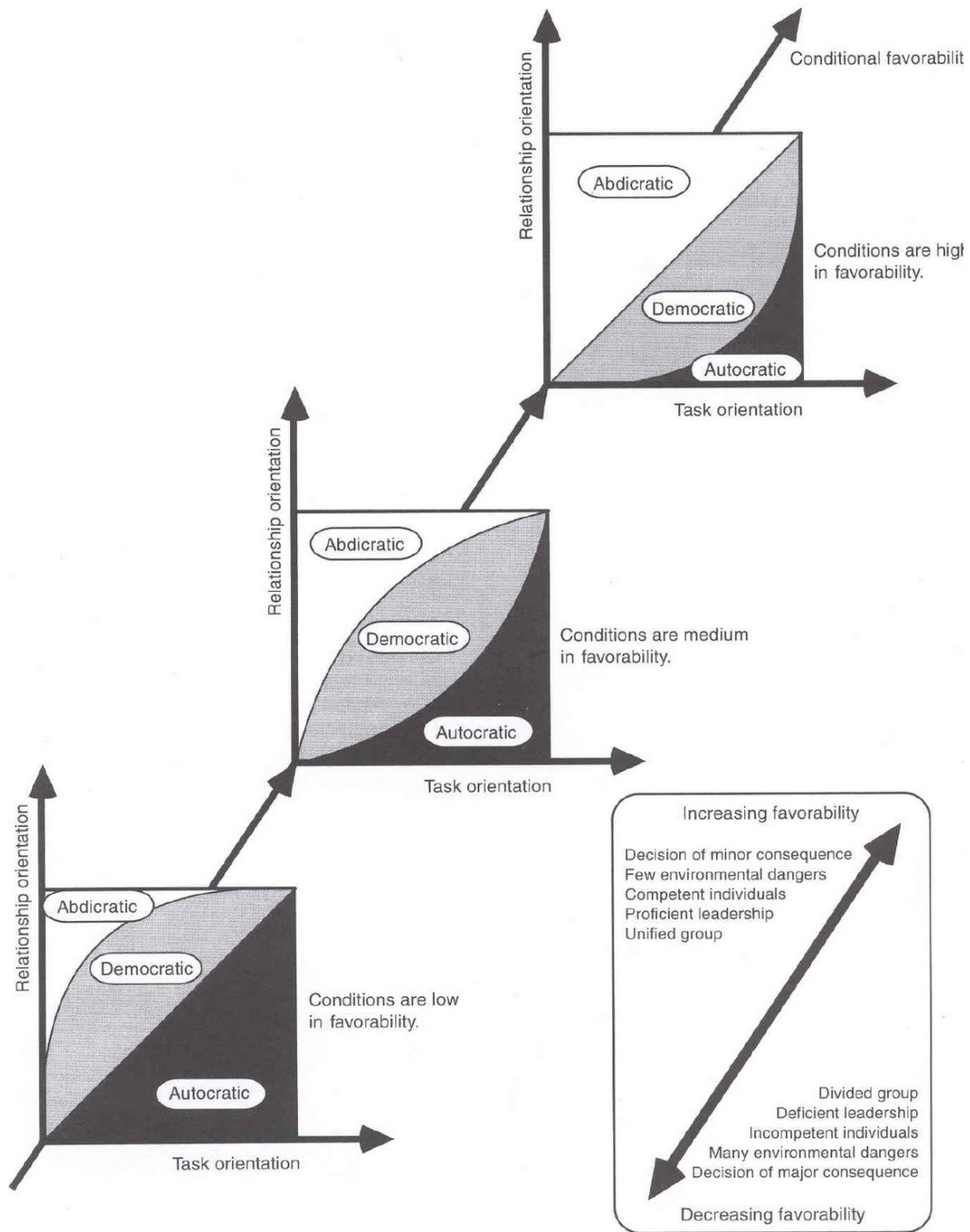
The model above has a scale of low, medium and high. Low being the least favorable conditions and high being the most favorable conditions to lead a group in. The center row shows five factors, which include environmental dangers, individual competence, group unity, leader proficiency and decision consequences. The model is re-enforcing the theory that depending on the factors you are dealing with while leading, it will change what type of leadership style you will need to use. Conditional favorability speaks to all the aspects of conditions faced in outdoor leadership and rates them from low, medium or high favorability. For example a leader would highly favor good weather and low hazards when dealing with an immature and irresponsible group, which would be low favorability.



## **Conditional Outdoor Leadership Theory Model (COLT)**

When you combine the three elements identified above being leadership styles, leadership orientation and conditional favorability you get a theory called conditional outdoor leadership theory. Figure 4 below, shows this theory in a visual form. As you can see from the model, the task orientation is on the x-axes, relationship orientation is on the y-axes and the conditions in favorability are represented on the z-axes. There are three representatives of the theory showing the low, medium and high conditional favorability levels. Within each graph the leadership flexibility lines are shown and are representing abdicratic, democratic and autocratic leadership styles.

Figure 4 relationship and task orientation model.



(Priest, Effective Leadership in Adventure Programing, 2005)

### **Low favorability**

The conditions of low favorability would be that the environmental dangers are high, the individuals in the group are incompetent, the group does not work well together, the leader is deficient in some way and the consequences of the decisions made are high. These unfavorable conditions are more unlikely to occur but in the outdoor field it could happen. In this situation the leader would probably lean towards a more task orientation and be more autocratic giving directed orders of what needs to be done.

### **Medium favorability**

The medium favorability style is what will be seen in most outdoor leadership programs and is where the dangers are acceptable, the group is reasonably competent the leader is capable, the group gets along quite well and the consequences or decisions are fair. Here the leader could use any of the three leadership styles autocratic if they are task orientated, abdicratic if they are relationship orientated or democratic if they balance task and relationship orientations. This is where most Outward Bound and NOLS programs would want to be aimed at in order to create challenge without danger.

### **High favorability**

High favorability would be more desirable for a leader as the environmental dangers are minimal, the leader is very skilled, the individuals are highly competent, the group is well molded and the consequences of decisions are minimal. In these circumstances as a leader you might use more of a relationship based abdicratic style, as you may want to see what you can get out of your group. You would have little use for an autocratic style in highly favorable conditions. These conditions could be a bit boring for some groups but very good for introduction type programs (Priest, 2005).

## **CHAPTER THREE: DISCUSSION**

In this section I will be discussing and analyzing the research I have collected from different disciplines and putting it together in order to create new knowledge. I will be answering the focus questions that are listed in the introduction that I have kept in mind while collecting my research.

As mentioned earlier I have been interested in leadership for many years and the reason I selected this topic for my thesis is to further discover new theories and philosophies surrounding alternative forms of education and to learn more about NOLS and OB. That said I do also have practical experience in leadership that I have gained over the years that I will be discussing as part of my findings.

Over the past seven years I have been put into many different leadership rolls and gained a good practical perspective of what it takes to be a good leader. My roles as a leader have been mostly in teaching children swimming, track and field and exposing them to fun outdoor games, although I am also a personal trainer and lead adults through training programs. I have also lead climbing, skiing, kayaking and hiking trips both with groups and for my own enjoyment.

I have learned a lot about myself and how I like to lead due to these experiences and no matter how many trips I have done there are always new challenges. Working in the outdoors can be very challenging as there are so many uncertainties that surround you such as changing weather, wildlife and all objective hazards associated with the natural environment. On top of that, as a leader you are expected to take a group of individuals out in this constantly changing environment and provide safety for all as you create an amazing experience. This is the reason not everyone can be a leader. The stress and expectations

placed on you as a leader are so intense that many people will probably never be good leaders or even attempt being one. Buell (1981) and Cousineau (1977) tried to identify the competencies for outdoor leaders through a series of three research projects and found 60 skills that a leader needs. There are no complete lists of what an experienced leader needs to have, which makes it hard to determine what skills people need to be leaders (Martin, 2006).

Throughout my research I have read a lot of papers that explain the qualities an individual needs in order to be a 'good' leader such as Priest (2005) and the 12 elements of effective leadership. The elements that are repeatedly mentioned by many researchers such as having rounded technical skills and being organized are all great attributes but are not the most important (Priest, *Effective Leadership in Adventure Programming*, 2005). In my experience and based on my research I have narrowed the most important characteristic down to being dynamic. Many would call this attribute by different names such as being diverse or flexible. I have chosen to call this attribute 'being dynamic' because the literal meaning of dynamic is being characterized "by continuous change, activity, or progress" (Farlex, Inc, 2014, p. 1). As a leader you are constantly faced with challenges and change, whether it is within the group, the individuals or the natural environment and it is the leader's job to be able to adapt to these changes in order to progress. Many would agree that being a dynamic leader will not work on its own and that there are many other aspects that go into being a leader.

Looking deeper into leadership styles and keeping in mind that the most important attribute is to be dynamic when in a leadership role we can start making more sense of what an exceptional leader looks like. Earlier I discussed Priest's (2005) visual representative (Figure 2) of different leadership styles, which were autocratic, democratic, and abdicative.

Priest (2005) discussed how each style is different; autocratic being very directive, abdicratic being more laissez-faire and democratic including the group in decision making (Priest, 2005). I think each of these leadership styles does have a place in guiding and leading people in the outdoors but a leader cannot only depend on one of these styles or they could cause injury or fatality within the group. This refers back to being a dynamic leader. There are many reasons why a leader cannot stick to one type of leadership style. In my literature review I mentioned Hersey's (2009) Situational leadership model where he describes how leaders need to choose a leadership style that is appropriate to the participants. In this model the leadership style used is based on confidents and ability of the participants, which translates into four types of leadership. This model emphasizes the notion that a leader needs to be dynamic, as every group will have different needs that need to be addressed.

For the purpose of this study I have been only looking at the safety and educational issues that might arise out of not being able to change from one style to another. Most leaders will turn their heads at being an autocratic leader as it is against most outdoor educational philosophies such as those used in experiential education. This statement is true in most cases and an individual will not be able to learn in a holistic manner if they are constantly being told exactly what to do. This style is very important in dangerous situations. An example of this would be if a leader is out rock climbing with a novice group of individuals and a rock hits a student knocking them out. In order to minimize risk to the other students and to stop further injury the leader needs to be direct and almost forceful with their instructions. Being a democratic or laissez-faire leader in this situation will almost guarantee further issues and slow the rescue down.

Being a democratic leader is also important because although you are in charge of a group of individuals, you want everyone to feel that they are an important part of the decision making process. This allows each member of the group an opportunity to challenge themselves and each other in coming up with new and innovative ideas. An example of when you might use democratic leadership is if you were out on a multi-day hiking trip. If the weather conditions are appropriate and the group's ability was suitable for the terrain, the leader could allow the group to plot out their own route on a map and take turns to lead. This approach of leadership makes up most of what NOLS and OB organizations want to achieve for their participants.

Abdicratic leadership when used correctly can be very productive in promoting holistic learning within the participants of an outdoor program. As a leader you have the ability to choose the environment set up in such a way that the individuals can make mistakes and learn an incredible amount about themselves and the world around them. This leadership style should only be used when the risk of injury or fatality is low and there are a lot of parameters set up for the individual. An example of a good use of abdicratic leadership is when a facilitator sets up a navigational treasure hunt course where the students take on the responsibility of leading themselves using a map, compass with pre-determined coordinates to follow. The guide or facilitator is only there to ensure the safety of the students and give them direction if needed. OB tends to use this style of leadership often as it builds character and self-confidants within the participants, which are some of their core values. On the other hand if you were teaching a novice group of individuals on how to set up a rock climbing top rope anchor, being an abdicratic leader could lead to injury or fatality.

At the end of the day as a leader and a guide of other people, it is your responsibility to keep everyone under your supervision safe as possible. If keeping them safe means being an autocratic, democratic and abdicator leader all in one day then that is what you have to do. Leadership is what keeps people safe and able to appreciate the natural environment and as a guide those should be your top priorities. Conditional Outdoor Leadership Theory Model (COLT) is a great tool in determining what sort of leadership role needs to be incorporated depending on the conditions you will be facing as a guide and will help lead you to being successful.

*What are the similarities and differences between how NOLS and OB programs are run and how facilitators lead their participants?*

NOLS and OB have many similarities but they also have very different objectives as organizations. The similarities are that they are both based outside of the traditional classroom setting, mostly in the backcountry. They are both non-profit organizations and have experiential based learning in common but that is where the similarities conclude (National Outdoor Leadership School , 2005).

OB has a primary objective that students focus on personal development and interpersonal connections whereas NOLS focuses more on technical skill development and leadership. In other words, OB focuses more on the soft skills and NOLS focuses more on the hard skills. In a NOLS curriculum, groups of students will go on an expedition together and lead each other as a team to gain guiding experience. OB will also encourage their participants to lead each other but with the intention in creating interpersonal relationships



and growth rather than to refine guiding skills. OB will also have elements of solo experiences for students, which encourages more reflective time for the participants.

Looking at both organizations mission statements further emphasizes the different intentions both philosophies have in mind for their participants. Outward Bounds mission statement is “To help people discover and develop their potential to care for themselves, others, and the world around them through challenging experiences in unfamiliar settings” (Outward Bound international, 2014, p. 2). NOLS’s mission statement, on the other hand is “to be the leading source and teacher of wilderness skills and leadership that serve people and the environment” (NOLS, 2014, p. 1). Analyzing the language used in both statements shows that OB is in fact more concerned with the internal feelings of each individual and wants to see growth within their participants whereas NOLS is driven to teach participants to be future leaders in the wilderness.

Although most evidence does point to OB and NOLS being completely different, there is research that shows many similarities. In a 2006 study Goldenberg (2011) asked participants of both OB and NOLS programs a series of open-ended questions that encouraged them into analyzing their experiences. They then entered the data into a computer system and organized it into three categories; attributes, consequences and values.

Once the data was collected it was obvious that there were quite a few similarities within the two programs. The most mentioned attributes for both groups were the same, which were ‘expeditioning’, ‘group’, ‘climbing’ and ‘wilderness’. For the consequences category the most frequently mentioned by both groups were ‘interactions’, ‘being challenged’ and ‘new experience’. The third category, values showed similar results with

both groups mentioning ‘transference’, sense of accomplishment’ and ‘self-respect/ self-esteem’ as the top outcomes.

The study concluded that although both programs are unique and are different in the way they are delivered, both programs do create very similar outcomes to their participants (Goldenberg, Russell, & Soule, 2011).

The results of the Goldenberg (2011) study has sparked quite an interest for me as even though both organizations had different intentions for their participants the outcomes were almost identical. This study has made me think back to my own experiences doing trips with the Capilano Wilderness Leadership course and with the TRU Adventure Guide program. Both programs are intended to train their students to lead others in an outdoor setting focusing on teaching the technical skills of guiding, yet I cannot help but to think back and realize that the outcomes for me where the same as for the students in the study for NOLS and OB. This notion brings me to another question. Do all multi day outdoor orientated programs leave students with the same underlying outcomes no matter what the agenda?

Based on my own experience and backed up by Goldenberg’s (2011) research I have read, in short I would say yes. I think that there are certain holistic experiences that all humans face when out in a new challenging wilderness environment. Think about it, being pulled out of the regular modern day routine into the middle of nature with a group of people you do not necessarily know and with all your belongings on your back. No matter what the objective, whether it is to summit a peak with seasoned climbers or out for a hike with a bunch of novices, we are all experiencing the same raw feelings. We all experience the basic human feelings such as accomplishment and boosting self-esteem while doing something

different. We adapt and transform to suit the weather or terrain. We face new challenging experiences and form new relationships. In truth I do think that there are many outcomes that would be similar in any outdoor course located anywhere around the world including OB and NOLS. That said, until I can interview participants from different disciplines taking part in outdoor related courses further research is needed to come to a solid conclusion on this speculation.

Referring back to my focus question I will now analyze what types of educational philosophies are used within NOLS and OB and how facilitators lead their participants. You do not have to look too deeply into Outward Bound to understand their educational philosophy. Just by looking at the organizations mission statement many connections can be made to experiential education. As mentioned by Miles and Priest (1999) experiential education is a foundation of learning. It is holistic and the student develops the learning process through experimentation.

NOLS core values and mission statement tends to be leaning more towards teaching their students the hard skills. Their main focus is to produce guides through educating their students about leadership philosophies and taking them on more technical based expeditions. They are using the outdoors to teach a specific activity rather than primarily trying to build character within the students so by definition they are using an adventure education philosophy. That said, earlier in my literature review I mentioned that experiential education is the umbrella and outdoor, adventure and environmental education are inter-related fields within experiential education, which figure 1 illustrated on page 15 (Martin, 2001, p. 23). This means that at the core, both NOLS and OB are both practicing experiential education philosophies and are just focusing on slightly different aspects within the philosophy.

In order to teach in an experiential format the facilitators need to allow the students to create learning through trial and error. This might mean the facilitator will take a more abdicatoric role when instructing. Outward Bound in particular will use this method frequently as they facilitate challenging experiences and allow students time to reflect on their own. NOLS will also use this laissez-faire type leadership but as they are more task orientated in teaching hard skills they may also have a more democratic style of leadership. So really facilitators from both organizations do use the same leadership styles in order to achieve their goals even though they have completely different intentions.

Looking at the hiring process of both OB and NOLS shows evidence of what each organization is looking for in their facilitators. OB advertises the preferred employee to be compassionate, engaging people who enjoy growth and new experiences. They describe specifically that group facilitation, life experience, enthusiasm and teaching skills are as important as having technical skills. They advertise that they hire both people with extensive outdoor background and people straight out of university or from different career paths. They have also created two programs that are aimed at people who want to work at OB but want more experience leading. These courses are optional and are not required in order for you to be hired. The courses are called Outward Bound Instructor Training Program and Rocky Mountain Instructor Development Program. One is a more extensive semester program and the other is a two-week program for more experienced leaders (Outward Bound, Canada, 2014).

NOLS advertisements for employment are very similar to OB in the qualities they are looking for in an employee but do emphasize more on having hard skills and first aid certifications. The major difference with the NOLS hiring process is that to even be

considered for a position you need to have taken a NOLS course. The traditional way to become employed by them is to take a 35-day instructors course and then work one field course for them. There is a new option that is a 17-day course for more experienced individuals (NOLS, 2014). NOLS likes to employ home grown facilitators who have learned their styles of teaching. This ensures that their models and philosophies are being taught and that the standards are being met.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: SUMMARY**

My thesis topic “a comparative analysis of leadership styles used at NOLS and OB” has sparked a diverse discussion on leadership, education and both National Outdoor Leadership School and Outward Bound. My initial objective of investigating which leadership styles are used within the two organizations has led me to a greater understanding that will help me in my future career and further studies.

From my own experience I know that guiding and leading groups of people in the outdoors can be challenging as there are many constantly changing factors such as weather and group dynamics. An outdoor leader has the primary responsibility in keeping the participant's safe, to preserve the environment and to enhance the quality of the experience (Martin, 2006). Further more there are many other factors that go into being a good leader as discussed by Priest (2005) as evidenced by his 12 elements of effective leadership. Through my own experience and backed up by research done by Martin (2006) and Priest (2005) it has been made obvious that being a dynamic leader is the most important aspect of leadership.

As discussed, there are three main types of leadership; autocratic, democratic and abdicatoric. Each leadership style is very different but each style does have its own place within guiding and facilitation. Both organizations instructors and guides may have a preferred method of leadership but to be effective in the outdoors all leaders need to be able to adapt to different styles of leadership as necessary. As mentioned earlier in the discussion, leaders need to be flexible and dynamic in how they lead their groups depending on the weather, group and environment. The facilitators need to be able to use Hersey's (2009) situational leadership model or Priest's (2005) COLT model and be able to react to any

situation in a productive and appropriate manner. This means no matter the intention of the organization or their preferred style of teaching, facilitators need to be well trained in all types of leadership.

As organizations, both NOLS and OB have very different objectives in mind for their participants. That said, they do both use experiential education as their primary philosophy and have many similarities. Focusing back on analyzing leadership styles used by facilitators in NOLS and OB I now realize that the philosophies and models used to facilitate their participants are in fact the same. As both organizations work within the parameters of experiential education they both use the environment to stimulate learning through the creation of challenging tasks. As they both use the outdoors to create learning both organizations facilitators need to be dynamic and be able to use the different leadership styles when needed.

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